CLAIMS

1. A method of regulating the pigmentation of skin and/or superficial body growths, comprising applying DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof to the skin and/or superficial body growths.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the DHEA or at least one of biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof is applied in the form of a composition.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein said biological precursor thereof is selected from the group consisting of cholesterol, pregnenolone, 17α-hydroxypregnenolone, 5-androstenediol, DHEA sulfate, 17α-hydroxypregnenolone sulfate and 5-androstenediol sulfate.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein said metabolic derivative thereof is selected from the group consisting of 5-androstene-3β,17β-diol (or adiol), 5-androstene-3β,17β-diol sulfate and 4-androstene-3,17-dione.

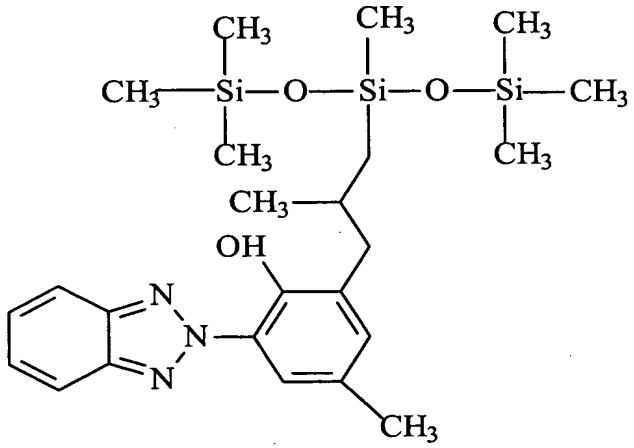
5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof is applied in the form of a composition comprising from 10^{-6}% to 10% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein the composition comprises from 0.1% to 5% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one of biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

7. The method of Claim 5, wherein the composition comprises about 1% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

8. The method of Claim 2, wherein the composition further comprises at least one UV screening agent and/or one other depigmenting agent and/or one keratolytic agent.

9. The method of Claim 8, the UV screening agent is selected from the group consisting of dibenzoylmethane derivatives, benzylidenecamphor-based UVA-active screening agents, benzylidenecamphor-based UVB-active screening agents, benzimidazole-type or benzoxazole-type UVA-active screening agents, benzophenone derivatives, silane derivatives, polyorganosiloxanes containing a benzophenone group, benzotriazoles, benzotriazole silicones, triazine derivatives, cinnamic acid derivatives, alkyl 2-cyano-3,3-diphenylacrylates, octocrylene, the compound of formula I below,



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and mixtures thereof.

10. The method of Claim 8, wherein said other depigmenting agent is selected from the group consisting of kojic acid, ellagic acid, arbutin and derivatives thereof, hydroquinone, aminophenol derivatives, iminophenol derivatives, L-2-oxothiazolidone-4-carboxylic acid and salts or esters thereof, procysteine and salts or esters thereof, ascorbic acid and derivatives thereof, and plant extracts.

11. The method of Claim 8, wherein said keratolytic agent is selected from the group consisting of α-hydroxy acids, β-hydroxy acids, α-keto acids, β-keto acids, retinoids, HMG-COA reductase inhibitor, and sugar derivatives.

12. A method of depigmenting and/or bleaching for the skin and/or to improving the homogeneity of the color of the skin, comprising applying DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof to the skin.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof is applied in the form of a composition.

14. The method of Claim 12, wherein said biological precursor thereof is selected from the group consisting of cholesterol, pregnenolone, 17α-hydroxypregnenolone, 5-androstenediol, DHEA sulfate, 17α-hydroxypregnenolone sulfate and 5-androstenediol sulfate.

15. The method of Claim 12, wherein said metabolic derivative thereof is selected from the group consisting of 5-androstene-3β,17β-diol (or adiol), 5-androstene-3β,17β-diol sulfate and 4-androstene-3,17-dione.

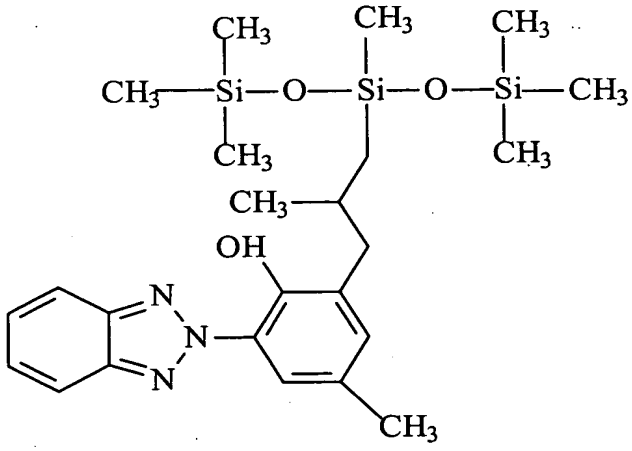
16. The method of Claim 12, wherein the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof is applied in the form of a composition comprising from 10^{-6}% to 10% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein the composition comprises from 0.1% to 5% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

18. The method of Claim 16, wherein the composition comprises about 1% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

19. The method of Claim 13, wherein the composition further comprises at least one UV screening agent and/or one other depigmenting agent and/or one keratolytic agent.

20. The method of Claim 19, the UV screening agent is selected from the group consisting of dibenzoylmethane derivatives, benzylidenecamphor-based UVA-active screening agents, benzylidenecamphor-based UVB-active screening agents, benzimidazole-type or benzoxazole-type UVA-active screening agents, benzophenone derivatives, silane derivatives, polyorganosiloxanes containing a benzophenone group, benzotriazoles, benzotriazole silicones, triazine derivatives, cinnamic acid derivatives, alkyl 2-cyano-3,3-diphenylacrylates, octocrylene, the compound of formula I below,



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and mixtures thereof.

21. The method of Claim 19, wherein said other depigmenting agent is selected from the group consisting of kojic acid, ellagic acid, arbutin and derivatives thereof, hydroquinone, aminophenol derivatives, iminophenol derivatives, L-2-oxothiazolidone-4-carboxylic acid and salts or esters thereof, procysteine and salts or esters thereof, ascorbic acid and derivatives thereof, and plant extracts.

22. The method of Claim 19, wherein said keratolytic agent is selected from the group consisting of α-hydroxy acids, β-hydroxy acids, α-keto acids, β-keto acids, retinoids, HMG-COA reductase inhibitor, and sugar derivatives.

23. A method of pro-pigmenting superficial body growths, comprising applying DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof to superficial body growths.

24. The method of Claim 23, wherein the DHEA or at least one of biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof is applied in the form of a composition.

25. The method of Claim 23, wherein said biological precursor thereof is selected from the group consisting of cholesterol, pregnenolone, 17α-hydroxypregnenolone, 5-androstenediol, DHEA sulfate, 17α-hydroxypregnenolone sulfate and 5-androstenediol sulfate.

26. The method of Claim 23, wherein said metabolic derivative thereof is selected from the group consisting of 5-androstene-3β,17β-diol (or adiol), 5-androstene-3β,17β-diol sulfate and 4-androstene-3,17-dione.

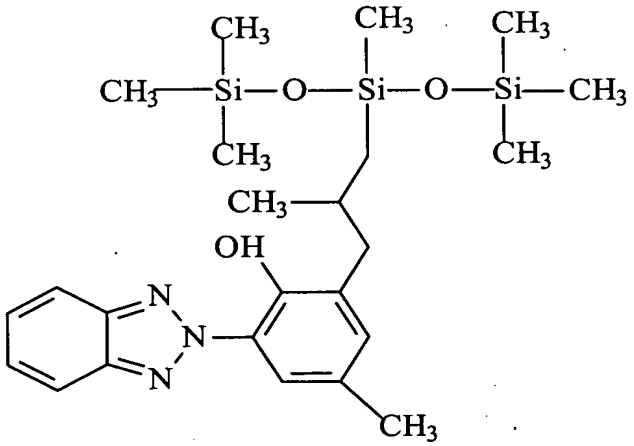
27. The method of Claim 23, wherein the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof is applied in the form of a composition comprising from 10^{-6}% to 10% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one of biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

28. The method of Claim 27, wherein the composition comprises from 0.1% to 5% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

29. The method of Claim 27, wherein the composition comprises about 1% by weight, relative to the total weight of the composition, of the DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof.

30. The method of Claim 24, wherein the composition further comprises at least one UV screening agent and/or one other depigmenting agent and/or one keratolytic agent.

31. The method of Claim 30, the UV screening agent is selected from the group consisting of dibenzoylmethane derivatives, benzylidenecamphor-based UVA-active screening agents, benzylidenecamphor-based UVB-active screening agents, benzimidazole-type or benzoxazole-type UVA-active screening agents, benzophenone derivatives, silane derivatives, polyorganosiloxanes containing a benzophenone group, benzotriazoles, benzotriazole silicones, triazine derivatives, cinnamic acid derivatives, alkyl 2-cyano-3,3-diphenylacrylates, octocrylene, the compound of formula I below,



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and mixtures thereof.

32. The method of Claim 30, wherein said other depigmenting agent is selected from the group consisting of kojic acid, ellagic acid, arbutin and derivatives thereof, hydroquinone, aminophenol derivatives, iminophenol derivatives, L-2-oxothiazolidone-4-carboxylic acid and salts or esters thereof, procysteine and salts or esters thereof, ascorbic acid and derivatives thereof, and plant extracts.

33. The method of Claim 30, wherein said keratolytic agent is selected from the group consisting of α-hydroxy acids, β-hydroxy acids, α-keto acids, β-keto acids, retinoids, HMG-COA reductase inhibitor, and sugar derivatives.

34. A composition comprising, in a physiologically acceptable medium, DHEA or at least one biological precursor thereof or metabolic derivative thereof, and at least one depigmenting agent selected from the group consisting of kojic acid, ellagic acid, arbutin derivatives thereof, hydroquinone, aminophenol derivatives, iminophenol derivatives, L-2-oxothiazolidone-4-carboxylic acid or procysteine and salts and esters thereof; and plant extracts, in particular extract of liquorice, of mulberry and of skullcap.

35. The composition of Claim 34, wherein said at least one depigmenting agent is selected from the group consisting of N-cholesteryloxycarbonyl-para-aminophenol, N-ethyloxycarbonyl-para-aminophenol, 4-carboxylic acid or procysteine, as well as its salts and esters; and plant extracts, in particular extract of liquorice, extract of mulberry and extract of skullcap.